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SUBJECT: POLICE SURROUND HOMES OF FOUR DRC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

1. (U) The Kinshasa homes of four DRC presidential candidates, as well as those of other prominent political personalities, were temporarily surrounded by elements of the Congolese police beginning the night of May 23. Among the presidential candidates involved were Mboso N'Kodia Pwanga (Convention for the Republic and Democracy -- CRD), Roger Lumbala (Rally of Congolese Democrats -- RCDN), Joseph Olenghankoy (Innovative Forces for Unity and Peace -- FONUS), and Pierre Matusila (independent). Valentin Mubake, the secretary general of opposition party Union for Democracy and

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Social Progress (UDPS), said his home had also been surrounded by police the same evening. General Patrick Sabiti, Kinshasa's police inspector, said police were deployed to these locations to provide security in advance of a planned demonstration in Kinshasa by the UDPS on May 24. Sabiti also said certain individuals had requested police protection, fearing the disorder that might result from the demonstration. (Note: An estimated 300 people took part in the UDPS rally, which also included members of the MLC and FONUS. The demonstration itself was uneventful, taking place under heavy police surveillance. End note.)

2. (U) The police action is somewhat puzzling as three of the presidential candidates whose homes were surrounded -- Matusila, Olenghankoy and Lumbala -- had been in neighboring Brazzaville since May 22 to meet with ROC President Sassou Nguesso, in order to discuss what they regarded as problems with the DRC's electoral system. The three were still in Brazzaville the night of May 23.

3. (U) Several organizations have criticized the police action as intimidation of political opponents by the GDRC. Two local human rights NGOs, the African Association for the Defense of Human Rights (Asahdo) and Voice of the Voiceless (VSV), issued statements saying such intimidation risks derailing the electoral process. The International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) issued a communique May 25 urging a climate of calm and tolerance during the pre-election period. The CIAT statement urged the GDRC to respect the rights of freedom of expression and assembly, as well as to take all necessary measures to ensure that security forces do not abuse their power.

4. (U) An unofficial translation of the CIAT communique follows:

"The International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) believes that a climate of calm and tolerance is essential during the entire electoral process, so as to ensure the respect of the principle of equal chances of success for all candidates and to allow voters to exercise their rights and civic duties in complete serenity. Peaceful rallies and legitimate debate must also be authorized so that public order during this period is maintained.

Therefore, the CIAT deplores the recent maneuvers of intimidation by certain armed security elements as they relate to several presidential candidates and certain political personalities associated with the May 24 demonstration. It denounces as well the political exploitation of the supposed coup d'etat.

Moreover, the CIAT is worried to see that methods of manipulation, intimidation and lies are in the process of overtaking the political debate which is suitable for an election period. It asks the government to make sure fundamental and constitutional freedoms be fully respected and to take all necessary measures in order that no abuses of power are committed by security forces.

The CIAT continues to call, on one hand, for the entire political class and all electoral candidates to respect the code of conduct during the electoral period and, on the other, for the government to show restraint in respecting especially the freedoms of expression and assembly.

(The CIAT is composed of the five permanent members of the Security Council (China, the United States, France, Great

Britain, and Russia), Belgium, Canada, South Africa, Angola, Gabon, Zambia, the European Union (Commission and Presidency), the African Union (Commission and Presidency), and MONUC.)"

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